California's Computer Magazine VOL. 2, NO. 1 • JANUARY 1985

MicroTimes™

The Next Computer Millionaire?

Doug Wolfgram, Creator of *PC Paint*

Photo: Don Hamilton

Photo: Don Hamilton

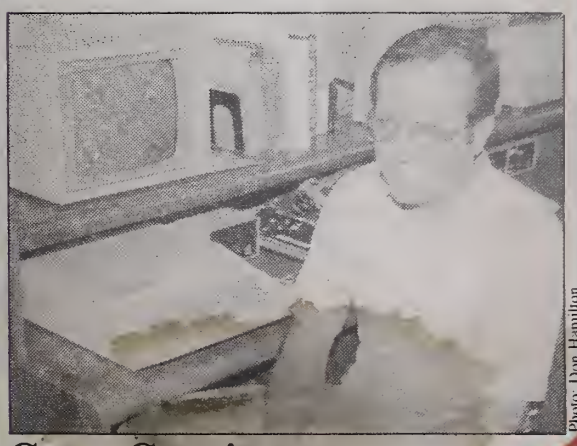
Sweet Savage Byte

Jina Infiltrates the Pig Sty

Photo: Ann Summa

Sacred Cows Beware

Peter McWilliams Speaks Out



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Gene Carriere Programs Computers

He's Also Blind

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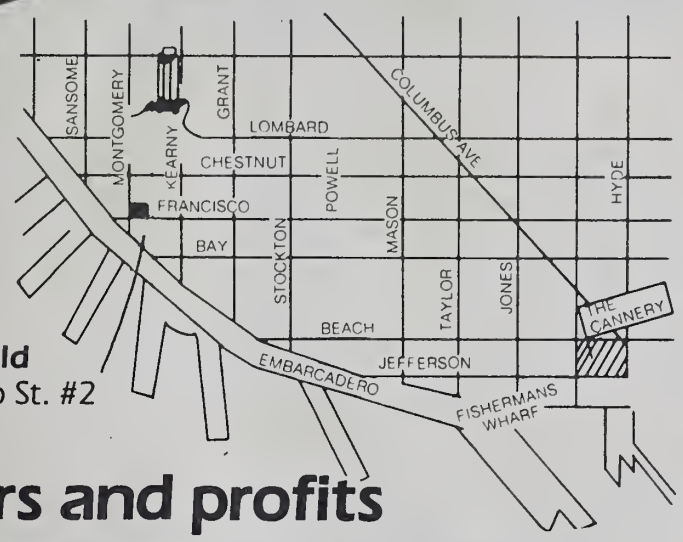

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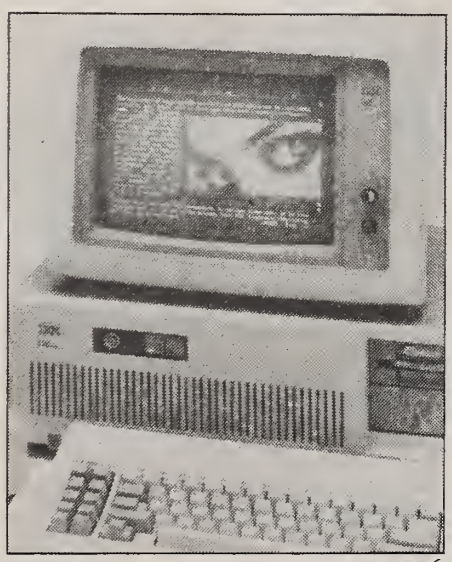
As the new year begins, it's obvious that one of the hottest new fields in the computer industry is graphics packages. What might initially seem like a nice expensive toy is turning out to have numerous practical applications in the real world as well.

One of the leading contenders in the graphics package field is *PC Paint,* which achieves spectacular, colorful results with ease and is available for IBM and compatible machines. In this issue, MicroTimes visits the creators of *PC Paint,* who relate the saga of its evolution from brainstorm to finished product.

In other features, Pat Hamilton visits two blind computer programmers and finds that the job market is not keeping pace with technology; Peter McWilliams gives Jeff Spurrier his latest iconoclastic views on the computer world; and Jina Bacarr relates how she attended the infamous Pig Fest and lived to tell the tale.



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MICROTIMES

California's Computer Magazine

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MARY EISENHART
Game Editor
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This Vol. 2, No. 1, January 1985, Whole No. 5 MicroTimes, California's Computer Magazine, is published by BAM Publications, Inc., 5951 Canning St., Oakland, CA 94609. Phone (415) 652-3810. Los Angeles Office, 1800 N. Highland, Suite 220, Hollywood, CA 90028. Phone (213) 467-7878.

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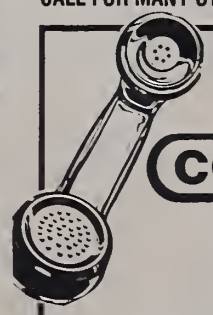

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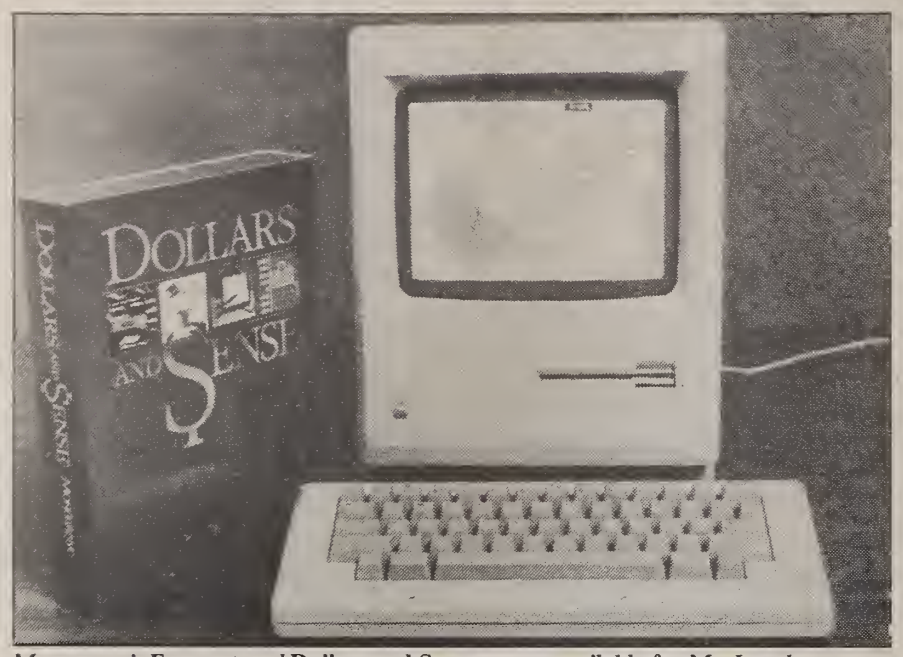
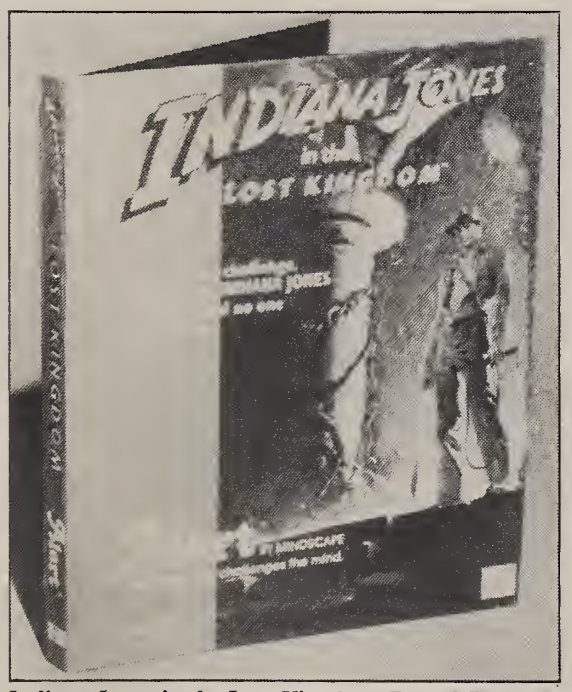


Monogram's **Forecast** *and* **Dollars and Sense**—*now available for MacIntosh*



Indiana Jones in the Lost Kingdom *From Mindscape*

Datacopy's Model 700 Word Image Processing System

IN RECEIVING

Murder by the Dozen, a new game from **CBS Software,** is a detective game for up to four players. You, the player, are one of the Investigating Officers in the Micropolis Police Department's Homicide Squad. There are twelve cases to solve, and you are timed and rated on your abilities. Each time you interview a person or go to a location you are given numbered clues. You look the numbers up in the clue book and take note of them all. The game is played until one of the detectives solves the case or the time runs out. The town is displayed on the screen, and the distance between locations is important to the time it takes you to complete the game. The game looks like all levels of puzzle solvers could enjoy it.

Trivia Fever can be played on the Apple series of computers. It can also be played without a computer, and a $5 rebate is available for the disk for non-computer owners. At the start of the game, the game master selects the number of questions that must be answered to win. There are 7 categories and each player must select five. The time length each player has to answer the questions can be varied from 5 seconds to 30 seconds. There are 3 levels of difficulty, and each player can be on any of the 3 levels. A lot of handicapping can be done in this game, which comes from **PSI Professional Software, Inc.**

Volkswriter Scientific by **Lifetree Software, Inc.** is multi-purpose. It is excellent for the scientific writer, but also useful to typesetters, designers, attorneys, business people, advertising agencies, academicians, and editors. The program drives HP Thinkjet, Epson FX-80 and many others. No more rub ons!

Super Sketch II by **Personal Peripherals, Inc.** sells for under $90. The difference between this input system and mouse or light pen is the ability to trace. The rigid handle can be traced around any image as an input for Paint programs. This feature is important for the non-artist who needs to put together a presentation.

The hardware comes with a disk that is IBM on one side and Apple on the other. The *Super Sketch II* comes with connecting cables for any of the computers it is compatible with. This system is a must for engineering and business firms that do presentation graphics outside the art department.

Monogram now has available the MacIntosh version of **Dollars and Sense,** the best-selling personal and business productivity package for financial management. Monogram has also released **Forecast** for the MacIntosh, Apple IIc, and Apple IIe.

Indiana Jones in the Lost Kingdom, introduced by **Windscape, Inc.,** and **Lucasfilm Ltd.,** challenges players to use problem solving abilities to find their way through six perilous rooms. The object of the game is for Indiana to retrieve an artifact that contains the complete history and knowledge of a lost, forgotten civilization.

Model 700 from **Datacopy** merges pictures into documents, operating with the IBM Personal Computer XT or AT and compatibles as a front-end peripheral. The system consists of the Model 210 Image Scanner, the Model III Imaging Interface, WIPS software and interconnect cable. The operator raises the cover of the Model 210 and places a document face down on the glass plate. Scanning is initiated from the PC and takes less than 30 seconds. Once scanned, the WIPS software can be used to create an image of the proper size and content for inclusion into a text or data document. The images can be integrated into most processors for the IBM.

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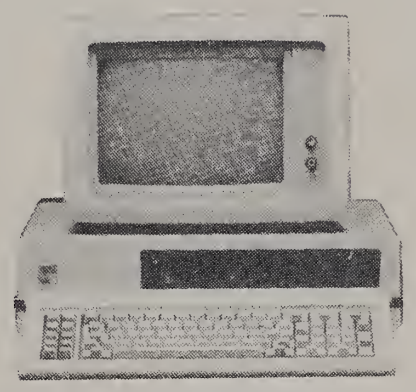

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Hi-Tech Choc Co. has developed a new disk that is double density, double sided, holds 64 bytes, and melts in your hand or your mouth. This edible disk system is compatible with approximately 240,000,000 personal computers in America. Chocolate disks are one of many of the computer related novelties being sold in computer stores.

Mac vs. IBM

MacIntosh is *not* perceived by most businessmen as the computer for the workplace. Not long ago there was no serious business software available for the MacIntosh. But now Apple is working on a networking system, and *Jazz* may be one of the most serious business software packages available.

If you haven't used a spreadsheet program on the MacIntosh, you have missed something. Believe it or not, the mouse is a great way to mark off areas on a spreadsheet. Rather than holding down the arrow keys, you sweep across the area of the screen that you wish to affect. If you have used *Framework,* you have enjoyed the available windows and zipping from word processor to data base with just a few key strokes. The MacIntosh makes all this much easier for the novice. On other systems, the key commands are sometimes difficult to remember or are not obvious. True, most programs try to make the commands easy to remember and easy to learn, and most of them *are* easy with most computers and require very little practice or experience to become proficient. Still, anyone who has tried to teach or help new computer users realizes that the difficulty is in getting people to try, not in making them proficient.

The whole concept of computerization is still a frightening thought to a new user (especially in an office environment) who has not yet decided that computers are useful. Novices are afraid of failure in front of their co-workers, and MacIntosh may provide an entry into computer usage for the fearful.

With the average life of an office computer system being 16 to 24 months before replacement, it would make some sense to introduce computers with an operating system that would get a lot of use. Starting with MacIntosh or some other system that is less threatening to novice users and can allow them to start out with some proficiency might be an effective strategy.

Apple's gamble may be paying off. Taking IB(Business)M on in the world of business computers is a pretty ambitious concept, especially when you consider the type of system Apple chose. A little-appreciated effect of Apple's marketing capability is that they have better advertising recognition than IBM—their advertising seems to have more staying power.

2010, The Movie

The movie, *2010*, was again not quite the same as the book, but alas! I believe there is an unwritten law that states "no movie shall have the same storyline as the book." I won't go into the changes here, because it's an excellent movie and I would hate to ruin it for anyone.

Why review a movie here? *2010* is not set so far in the future that the technology is unrecognizable to the average viewer. The space walks portrayed in the movie are becoming common occurrence on the five o'clock news. Computer speech technology is not as far away as it was when *2001* was made, and all the odds makers predict that artificial intelligence is only 10-15 years away at the maximum. I would suspect that the HAL 9000 is on target for the *2001* period.

The background scenes in the movie are breathtaking. The animation is great. The story fits well with the *2001* movie, and answers some of the questions left unresolved in the original movie. It's a great movie and I highly recommend it.

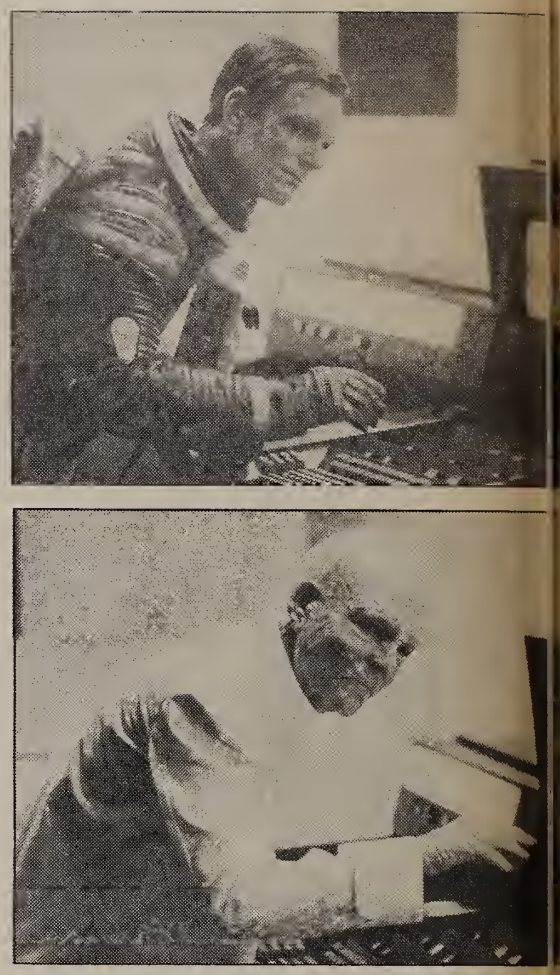
Data Security

If you have installed a large data base system, a computer with a hard disk, or are just beginning to store very large amounts of information, then you should consider the frightening possibility that all the data you have gathered, or a significant percentage of it, could be lost by accident.

Data security is becoming a hot issue. Inexperienced people all over the country are reformatting hard disks over tediously gathered data. Your data files are also at risk if backups are not being kept, or not being organized properly.

Disks that are kept as backup should be kept separately but not stored so far away, or made so difficult to obtain, that it discourages their use. The person responsible for the information should instill in the users of the system an almost religious need to maintain backup material.

Backups should also be made at some interval that makes sense and saved in some separate place from the standard backup copy in case of fire or accidental erasure of the current backup. Sometimes



***David Bowman and his buddy HAL go through a few more changes in* 2010, The Movie**

when there is a problem with the hardware, software data can be destroyed. When the original is pulled out and the backup *is* located (with a sigh of relief), and installed in the machine, you discover that the same problem that killed the original also kills the backup. A severe case of depression can develop. *You!* are responsible. You did not develop a security system and enforce it. . .

The IBM-AT Hold

Hold-up of the IBM-AT may hurt year-end sales, as lots of companies are withholding purchases until the AT is available. The impact on dealers may be significant. There is quite often an end-of-the-year buying spree with remaining unused but budgeted funds. The new year in many companies brings new budgets with new controls and conflicts.

"Venturepoint"

San Jose, California, has a new TV show, *Venturepoint.* The show covers new high tech companies with interviews, discussion, and insights. This will be good to watch if you want to follow trends in the computer industry. Call KSTS for show times. (408) 946-3400.

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Computer Occupations and the Blind

With improving technology and a lot of hard work, many blind people have acquired the skills and training to handle just about any computer-related job. Their biggest problem is getting a chance to prove it to an employer. Two blind programmers tell MicroTimes' Pat Hamilton their stories.

By Pat Hamilton

It was another gorgeous, sunny, Southern California day as I entered La Habra High School's computer classroom where Kurt Yount and Gene Carriere are enrolled in a Regional Occupational Program course. I found them both engrossed in their work at their respective terminals — oblivious to the beauty of the day outside. They are both blind.

Kurt, now 32 years old, was born blind, and Gene was declared "legally blind" in 1975. I recalled my early days on the computer: gifted with sight, I was able to read the manual and see the keyboard, yet I remember how frustrated I would become when something just didn't work right. I could scarcely imagine the frustration of attempting to become proficient at a terminal without the use of sight. With this in mind, I asked the men if they marked their keyboard in any way to give them some idea if their fingers were even touching the correct keys. (They were both using Apple IIes which are marked on the "d" and "k" keys by the manufacturer.) They said that they can mark keyboards for the index finger on the home row, but that as a rule there are no different markings that the blind use. Kurt says, "Switching between computers can lead to more errors because you might expect an apostrophe and instead get the back arrow." Therefore they tend to learn and stay with one system.

I asked if they had ever attempted to access a bulletin board, but both agreed that currently it is very difficult for the blind to access a system and get any workable information out of it. When asked about use of audio and music programs in particular, Kurt told me about an organization called "BAUD" (Blind Apple User's Discussions) which has some music diskettes available for copying at a price. Kurt currently does not own a computer at home but hopes that "some day when I'm rich — or at least can get a job — I'll have one. It would save so much time."

Gene Carriere is a former systems analyst for Xerox and has been in that field since 1961. Gene was on a disability program through Xerox when he heard about ROP having a system that talked, and he admits, "I couldn't believe it could help me. But I came up and checked it out anyway because that's the way I am. Then I was locked in." Gene's eventual goal is to start his own business. He says, "I'm beginning to roll right now. I've been writing a lot of software but I haven't had the appropriate software to purchase to make what you write run fast and efficiently, so it wasn't functional. I have that now and am in the process of checking out a lot of things which I have written. Then I'll eventually sell these programs."

Questioning Gene further, I asked him how he felt about telecommuting, an innovation which allows employees to work at terminals in their own homes, for the blind and handicapped. He feels that the blind are "way behind in that area. We haven't pushed enough of the manufacturers of software for modems to adapt so that they will work with voice synthesizers. That is the problem we're having right now."

This prompted more questions about voice synthesizer programs. Gene feels that the Echo II Synthesizer by Street Electronics in Carpenteria, California, is one of the best programs available. "When the screen stops and prompts you for input, you can get into review mode and look at everything on the screen — character for character, word for word or anything you want. You can review the whole thing from start to end. The other synthesizers don't do that. This is extremely important for a blind person. If he's listening to his checkbook program, reviewing checks and discovers that check #101 is wrong, how is he going to review it again without running the whole program? With this program the screen stops so he is able to review it again."

Gene is also a member of Blind Apple User's Discussions (BAUD). This user group is different from others as the members don't physically meet together. They have a newsletter that comes out on cassette six times a year which contains information that blind computer programmers would find useful: new programs which are about to be

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(L-R) Kurt Young, Gene Carriere, Pat Hamilton

released, and products for sale. Kurt points out that none of the programs on cassette are pirated. He further emphasized that, "The only machine which is currently supported by synthesizers in any form for use by the blind is the Apple. Therefore you must use software compatible with the Apple II+ or IIe, and that would include being able to correct your own material for word processing as a job opportunity. There may be new systems that I'm not aware of, however, or rejected early on due to expense. The IBM PC is, I hear, chosen as the next 'Computer of Choice' for the blind by at least one national organization — The National Federation for the Blind."

I asked how a blind programmer actually visualizes a program. Gene feels it's much easier for him, since he has years of background as a sighted programmer. "The only place I get into real trouble is when I have a subroutine to write which is very complicated and is all pure logic. I used to sit down and hand scratch out a little flow chart and check it out in my head. Well, I can't do that now so I have to write a little bit on the screen, review it a little bit, and try to form a mental picture that it's working, then check it out like you would normally check out a basic program. But it's a lot tougher! Most of the logic is simple for me because I have done it so many times I know exactly what to do. I don't even have to think about it. But for a guy like him (indicating Kurt) the concept is really tough. He's never even seen a flow chart, so he can't visualize it."

Kurt can only visualize letters, like the letter "a" as a braille dot, but he says, "Actually I don't even visualize letters in braille. It's just something that's there. It's so abstract. It is difficult to write a program for someone. Gene has written a budget program and a checkbook program at my instigation. Where I get stuck is similar to a writer sitting at a typewriter with a blank page. Where do you start? Since programming is a hobby for me and not a realistic job possibility, I enjoy it, it's fun, but it's also very frustrating. I enjoy word processing and writing — whether it's it's writing letters, science fiction or whatever. I would much rather use programs that have been written, and I'm not too worried about the programming end of it. I'd rather be able to use those kinds of programs and to do that well." Kurt has entered some of his science fiction in contests and would like to sell a short story or novel someday.

Despite the hard work and impressive qualifications of many blind computer operators, the job market is still fairly bleak, particularly in programming. Myrna Capsuto, La Habra's ROP Office Occupations Instructor, says, "Kurt didn't know how relevant he was when he was saying that he's more interested in the computer applications rather than the computer programming. As far as I'm concerned, we all feel that to make a career of programming, you really need a degree and maybe even an advanced degree. There are so many people going into this that it is really an overcrowded field. On the other hand, there is a great need for people to apply the programs that have been written. Why reinvent the wheel?" Gene and Kurt have tried to do some of this."

Even so, placement of her handicapped students has been difficult, Myrna sadly admits. "I was truly amazed, without mentioning names, at some of the large companies. They are not willing to even consider adapting equipment that they may have. The students are even willing to purchase their own equipment, but are not actually considered for the positions. The total cost today for adapting the Apple IIe is $150.00 for the voice synthesizer and approximately $350.00 for the word processing abilities. So the entire cost is approximately $500.00."

Kurt feels that companies fail to realize that handicapped people "who have worked hard for a year and a half to become job-ready are going to be much more dedicated than most employees who just walk in off the street, because they have been waiting for this job. It's like holding your breath. When you finally take that breath, you're going to take the biggest breath that you can." ■

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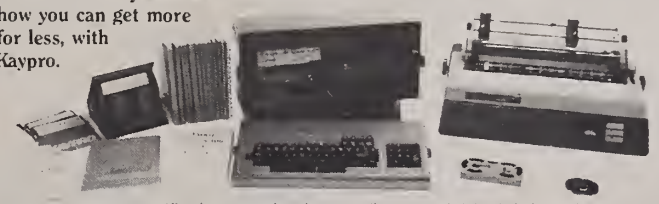

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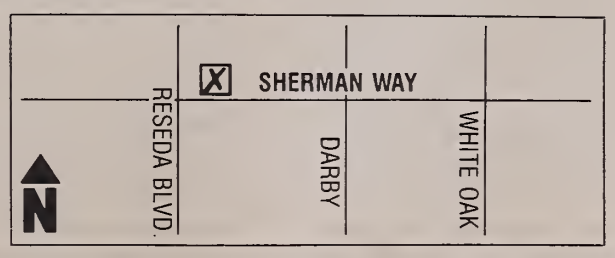


THE PC PAINT STORY

MicroTimes interviews the creators of the hot new graphics program PC Paint: *Doug Wolfgram, President of Microtex Industries, and Jim Norman, Microtex Vice President and Director of Marketing*

By Don and Pat Hamilton

What is your educational background, Doug?
Doug: I have a degree in Engineering Physics from Oregon State University. I hated computers in college, unlike most of the kids today. I played *Star Trek* until 5 in the morning a lot on the big systems, but that was about all I did on computers. I took the minimum Fortran class. I didn't really start programming until 1980. I started fiddling around with a desktop Hewlett Packard at work and later bought an Apple. My involvement with computers has only been over the last four years.

How big is your company, Microtex?
Doug: Officially, four people; Jim, myself, Rob Neville and John Bridges.

How did you get into paint programs?
Doug: Well, about a year and a half ago, I did a program called *Mouse Draw*™ just for fun. I took it to Softcon in New Orleans and tried to sell it. Mouse Systems was interested enough to call me back. They wanted something more like *Macpaint*™, so I started to change the program.

John Bridges did almost the actual coding. He changed the product I had done into a new program structured around the *Macpaint*. The original program was a menu driven full page draw program without icons.
Jim: We find that innovation in the industry really happens through individuals working alone. Large projects are best done by teams. If you are doing an American Airlines reservations system, a team is the best approach. The real innovation comes from people.

So Doug put together the concept and each of these team members put together a small portion of the product?
Doug: John and I did most of the programming. Actually he did most of the programming. Sometimes he would write some code and I would rewrite it and sometimes it would be the other way around. Other people involved had specific tasks. One guy did the font development. Another, Rob Neville, designed a polygon fill routine for us. Rob, of all the people I work with, is the most mathematically knowledgeable. Rob Neville and Fred are mathematical, Keith Comer is more artistically driven and John is basically a real guru with graphics in general and a wiz with languages. The main reason for working with him in New York was his familiarity with the languages. Combining all these talents was my basic role in this. I also helped edit the fonts from time to time, reworked and rewrote certain blocks of code, and worked on the bases for the polygons, etc.

How did you meet these people?
Doug: They're all in the "Pigsty." (See *Sweet Savage Byte)*

What is the eventual reward for these people being involved in the program?
Doug: MONEY! The guys get paid a flat amount for a particular routine they develop and then they get some of the royalties.

In your experience of collecting talented people like this, do you usually pay them up front?
Doug: Since I'm working with people I know, they have enough confidence in me to know that if it works out, I'll take care of them. Most of these guys live under the impression that they know they're good—the best—at what they do and that the money will be there. That's my role as the shaper or molder—to be sure the money is there for them.

So your agreements are built on personal relationships rather than legal contracts?
Doug: To some extent. I do write up contracts with each person, but I'm not bound by contract before any work begins. In the case of John, I was, because he was dealing with a major percentage of the product. I needed to lay out what he was going to do and what his responsibilities would be. The other guys are just friends helping each other out, which is what we have been doing for a long time in the "Pigsty."

There has been a lot of work for Jim since the beginning, dealing with Mouse Systems, dealing with their lawyers and my lawyers, making sure that the contract goes, making sure that the deadlines are met, that money is paid, etc. That turned out to be a bigger job than originally planned. We didn't realize how much would be involved.

I understand that you had some trouble with Apple Computer feeling your product too closely resembled their Macpaint.
Doug: Well, we didn't; but Mouse Systems did, so since they were the ones who would absorb the liability of whether or not it was like Apple's program, we made some changes. For example, Apple claims to have a patent on the technique used in "pull down menus," so we did it a different way. The icons are quite a bit different; we don't use the same shapes as Apple does. Other than that, the only thing that is still similar is the visual impression.
Jim: Apple has at least a patent pending on the pull-downs and a couple of other features of the *Macpaint*. I don't think it's really a major issue because there are 27 different ways to go about design-

ing and getting to a particular effect. We have actually gone to a "pop-up" style at this point where you press a selection along the top bar, the menu pops up, and you then choose from that. Pop-ups and pull-downs have been in use for some time.

How many IBMs and IBM "look-alikes" are there out there that might potentially use this product?
Doug: IBM sold well over a million PCs. That figure does not include the Compaqs, Eagles, Coronas, Columbias, etc. Any PC look-alike using a similar copy of the graphics card will work. The difference with this and the MacIntosh is that you have to go out and buy this Mouse. It doesn't come bundled with the system and as far as I know IBM has no intention of bundling a Mouse with the PC system. So it's an add on product, which makes the percentage sold lower.

We do see the evolution of a standard type of program as the results of the COMDEX show. The first couple months of sales indicate that people are very interested in having a paint product as a piece of standard operating equipment on their machines for business and home use.
Jim: We are seeing more and more opportunities for this paint product. The initial one, of course, is that Mouse Systems is interested in selling mice. *PC Paint* is a very good add-on product because when somebody first buys the Mouse, takes it home and plugs it in, they immediately have something that is visually identifiable. The program is a first start-up, very easy to understand, very easy to use and fun product for that.

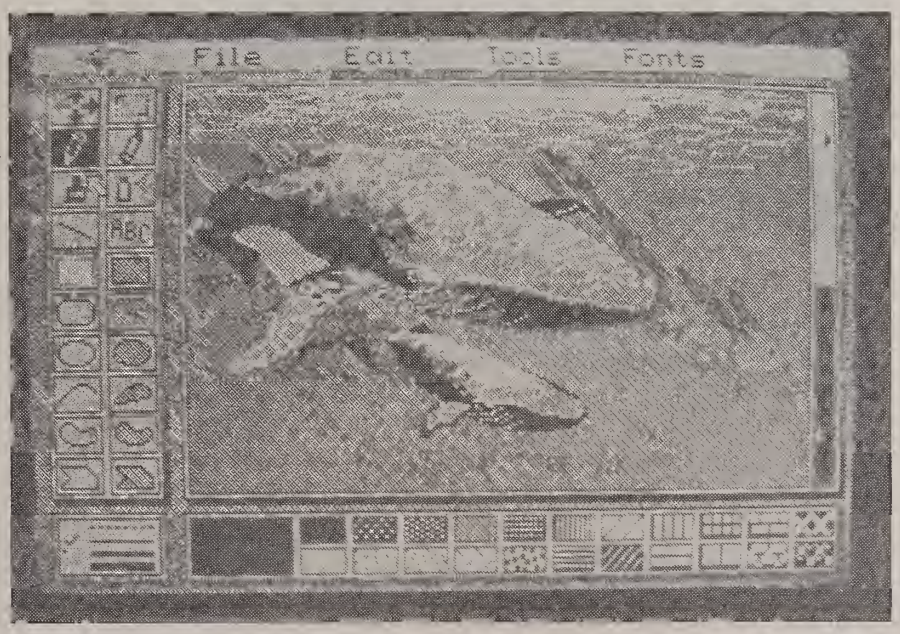
The second application, and probably the bigger one, where it is really going to go long term, is that there are a lot of basic business graphics packages out there. Quite a number include graphics, and you have some control of the picture, but if you want to go in and add pictorial representation of things, it's quite difficult. You can save a picture from a business graphics package, bring it into *PC Paint* and be able to modify it and enhance it for the presentation you want to make in business. We see that as a significant marketplace for this product.

In other words, taking a graph made on Lotus *and maybe spray painting the company logo on it or something to that effect?*
Jim: Exactly. You can add three dimensional effects or bring additional art work in to enhance an existing picture, and this can be saved like a clip art type of thing.

Is it easy for a novice user to combine a Lotus *file with* PC Paint?
Doug: It is *not* difficult at all. The only difficult thing we have run into at all with the paint type product is that you cannot make people into artists. We can provide a variety of tools which will allow you to do some very complex things, but it still takes an artistic knowledge and ability to realize what is esthetically pure and good.

That's one of the problems today with business graphics. Almost every business package out there that I know of allows you to make a poor quality chart if you don't know what you're doing. They let you make bad graphics. Our product wasn't necessarily designed to fix that, but it was designed to allow you a little more control over what you're doing. I think you'll see a major change in the way business graphics are handled.
Jim: We have another product called *Flash Gun*™ which is a presentation, slide show product. There are a lot of slide show things out there, but basically they operate just like a slide projector—they pop one picture in after the other. The major difference with *Flash Gun* is that it has 40 different possible fades and dissolves between different pictures in the carousel.
Doug: The value of a product like *Flash Gun* is that even if you have a very well prepared presentation and you are doing regular 35 mm slides, there is still the slight discontinuity when you change the slide. You have placed a thought or subject in the audience's mind and then you change to something else. Whereas even though the dissolves aren't necessarily related to the topic being discussed, they provide a smooth flow to the presentation. A well-prepared presentation with a device such as *Flash Gun*, with smooth, animated control between slides, allows you to do overlays and animation on slides. The emphasis of *Flash Gun* is the wide variety of screen dissolves and then, of course, using those to create special effects.

We actually did *Flash Gun* over a year ago, but whenever I went to show it to people for publication the first question was, "Where did you get those pictures?" They were still interested in making the pictures. That's one of the reasons that I contacted Mouse Systems—because we needed a way to make the pictures. Now I can make them so maybe it's time to go back on the market with a product that will use the pictures. I guess we jumped way ahead of the market. Sometimes foresight isn't that good.



Is the market really evolving to business graphics?
Doug: Oh, yes. You read any of the trade journals and they are all talking presentation graphics—that's the big buzz word.
Jim: I see several different things. People have a drive to be creative. I'm not particularly artistically creative, but I find I can sit down with a product like *PC Paint* and add some creativity to some basic things that are there. I think there are a lot of people out there like that who can add their creativity in privacy and be able to have fun with it as well. We see a significant market for the fun aspect of things.

The other is straight business: putting together professional looking presentations. People have worked for years with flip charts and overhead transparencies. Slides have been beyond most people in the way of expense. Now the tools are being developed so people can do professional presentations without the huge expense.
Doug: The IBM PC in its current mode is still a little low in the quality stand. Of course they have announced new higher resolution, more color graphics systems which will allow you to create much nicer things. With devices such as the Polaroid Palette,™ you can make very high quality slides even with the current IBM screen in a variety of colors using filters and overlays. If you do want to go the slide route, you can pay anywhere from $20 to $150 per slide. This price is too high for small companies.

PC Paint allows people to create good quality—not professional quality yet—graphics. Professional level is evolving out of it with high res systems and the developments we make in products like *PC Paint*. Cut and paste operations manually are very difficult to do, to even align, but a product like ours allows you that control.

Do you see the art departments in larger corporations encouraging or discouraging this type of product?
Doug: I see the art departments *buying* it. It's fun for them too. It rids them of some of their mundane tasks. This allows them more flexibility.
Jim: It's always disturbed me when people think of a particular sized pie and try to figure out how we can slice up the pie into different slices. I think what we are doing here is making a bigger pie so that more people have access to it.

Are these companies really buying PC Paint *to do fancy graphics presentations or are they buying it to have a little fun painting?*

Doug: I don't really know if they are buying it for that particular reason. They're buying it for other reasons and using it for presentations at this point.

People are buying it because when they walk into a store, it looks good. It helps sell hardware and it helps sell machine systems as well as mice, and if they stop to think about it, it not only is attractive, but useful.

Another thing you are seeing happening slowly is the evolution of merging text and graphics. The MacIntosh from Apple does that very well, and we do it to some extent in *PC Paint*. You can't boot up *Wordstar* and merge a pie chart with it, but you can take a block of text out of *Wordstar* and put it into *PC Paint* around your pie chart.

At this point, not many are being sold to large corporations compared to what's on the street. Even the MacIntosh can attest to that. There are very few MacIntoshes in large corporations compared to other PCs. But the small business and home users are flocking to this type of product. Sitting at the COMDEX show, one of the executives from IBM came up and said, "I've got one of those [*PC Paint*] at home—for my kids of course." We aren't sure exactly where the paint programs are going now because they currently seem to be going all directions at once.

What advantages does your product have over the others?

Doug: Mostly user interface. Our competitors say "Our feature list is longer than yours, so we must be better." I think if you put all the competitors on PC screens next to *PC Paint* and had users who had never seen the product walk up and ask them to start painting, ours would be the easiest to use by far. It has better performance than most in all areas. There is no one that does anything faster or better than we do.

Mouse Systems did a tremendous amount of work in-house, going through the actual user interface—what operations of clicking the buttons would actually draw a rectangle and do these types of things. They got things very well isolated. Everything is consistent. For example, the right button always does the same thing on a three button mouse. The "alt" key is always for special effects. All these things contribute to a well-defined user interface that is consistent. They also spent a lot of time going through the error messages to be sure they weren't just a copy of the IBM error messages, which are a little ambiguous at times. We have very clear error messages.

Doug Wolfgram demonstrates **PC Paint**. *Photo: Don Hamilton*

Jim: This product was developed quite quickly; it could have been in the marketplace even quicker than it was, but it wouldn't have been nearly the product that it is. We worked through a prototyping approach. We developed some basic standards which Doug described as far as use of the buttons and keys so that they were consistent throughout. But in a number of places there would be four or five different ways to do something, and what was done was quickly develop an implementation of that and try it out so we could see how it *felt*. How does the product actually work when I have it in my hands? It's something you cannot do with paper specifications. No matter how hard you try, you can't tell how a product is actually going to feel. After developing three to five approaches to a thing, we chose the one which "felt" the best and was the most consistent with the rest of the product.

Doug: Mouse Systems also had artists working with the program since the very beginning. We wanted to get the artists' perspective of what it was like to use. I had friends evaluate it and tell me what they would like to see added as features. That helped a lot.

Originally we wanted to be similar to *Macpaint,* but there were several things we didn't like about it. We didn't agree at all with the way they handled the mouse. When the Mac first came out, Apple talked about the mouse being like a pencil. Since you have to push to write with a pencil, they felt that anytime you were doing things with the screen, the button had to be depressed. But if you have ever tried to write while holding down the button on a ball point pen, it is pretty tough. It causes tension. Artists have a hard time drawing with tension in their hand. You can't flow and relax. So we didn't agree at all with the Apple interface and were glad to change the way we do the menus. People automatically click the button, they don't walk over the depress the button and drag. A computer screen with an icon and mouse just isn't a piece of paper and pencil.

What special features does your program have over your competitors?

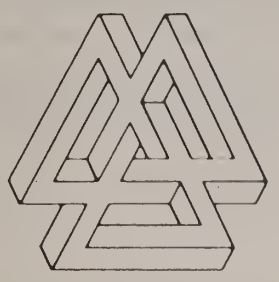
Jim: I think one of the really neat features is the ability to undo. If you put something up and you're not quite sure you like the looks of it, you can undo that, step back to what it looked like before, and then flip back and forth to see which way it looks better until you decide. I think that's a unique feature.

I think in many products today there is something called "featuring mongering." You keep adding more and more features, until the product becomes less intuitively obvious. It's the simple, fundamental, intuitively obvious things that are really successful.

Are you planning any expansions or enhancements to your program?

Doug: We will be providing them. Since the program is error-free, it is easy to go in and make modifications without causing a lot of other problems. We plan to see where the corporate needs are, as they are obviously quite different from the IBM vice president's kids. We plan to continue to support the program and enhance it.

I know probably three hundred people who could have written *PC Paint*; however, only John could have written in the time frame that he did. That's important because this marketplace is incredibly fast-paced and volatile. I see my role in building Microtex as being a genius molder; I take bare genius and mold it into a shape that is marketable and usable. I just structure the flow. I encapsulate the flow, focus the lens, get it into a little bundle and then give it to Jim. Jim takes that bundle and sells it. Jim has enough background in programming and computers to understand the real value of the products. I've tried to surround myself with visionaries. But I've never seen a book in print on *Managing Visionaries.* Maybe I'll write one some day. . .■



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Sweet Savage Byte

"MY NIGHT OF PASSION, PIRATES AND — PIGS?"

By Jina Bacarr

"Avast, me proud beauty, ye have no choice — or ye will walk the plank!" my bearded editor ordered as I begged for mercy. (Why hadn't I ever noticed that black patch over his right eye before?)

"No, no!" I pleaded, shivering. The perspiration dripped from my noble brow. I couldn't go *there*, meet *them*. Would I go *that* far, even for MICROTIMES?

As I looked into the cloudy deep of his algae-rimmed pool, I knew I had no choice. I had to meet the infamous software pirate members of the Pig Sty or my career — perhaps my life — was over.

It was a dark and stormy night (really!) when I set out on my adventure. The rain pounded against the tinted windshield of my horseless carriage (okay, so I'm borrowing a little from one of my romance stories) when I relentlessly ventured onto the freeway, expecting any minute to meet up with a tall, dashing highwayman. After all, this promised to be better than sitting through an Errol Flynn movie in Technicolor and Cinemascope: I was about to become the first visitor allowed to attend a secret meeting of the Pig Sty, a coast-to-coast computer group of hackers whose members were on a first name basis with their local FBI. Since Sty denizens boast such fascinating "handles" as the Cracker, Cesspool, the Bishop and Head Swine, I knew it was going to be an interesting evening. The question reverberating in my brain was: would it be my last?

As I turned off the freeway, I looked for the Skull and Crossbones that would identify the Pig Sty meeting. They weren't kidding. The Jolly Roger Inn sign greeted me at my point of arrival. I wasted no time and donned my domino cape as I hunted down their clandestine place of operations. But instead of the rancid, foul-smelling hold of a pirate ship, I was greeted by the elegance of gilded wallpaper and beveled mirrors in the banquet room of the Inn. (It wasn't that easy to find, however. I disturbed more than one sleeping hotel guest in my pursuit of the right room.) This was the Pig Sty? This dapper group of ladies and gentlemen in everything from tuxedos to rumpled sports coats? Long John Silver in a Brooks Brothers suit?

Aye, mateys, it's true. The notorious Pig Sty is made up of some very interesting people with even more interesting stories to tell. I was amazed, horrified and delighted as I heard them all.

The Head Swine (tall, handsome and debonair) took my arm and introduced me to the rest of the Sty. Big Cheese, E.T., Ceedubu, Shadow and L.S.D. (the Cracker was in jail that weekend so he couldn't make it) were some of the members I crossed swords with. However, when one Swine member remarked, "Have you told her about our white slavery ring?" I almost ran for the door. "Sssshh," the Head Swine warned, "You'll spoil the surprise!"

Surprise? Was this a Pig Fest or a Pig Roast? I became even more wary as the evening continued.

In self-defense, I decided to find out as much as I could about these software pirates (in case I had to send an S.O.S. in a bottle from a ship on its way to Shanghai).

In my best Sherlock Holmes manner, I inter-

viewed the various members, hoping one of them would slip up and reveal what plans they had in store later for their "guest." (Everything from a free trip to the pen to a personalized invitation to visit J. Edgar Hoover crossed my mind).

Who started Pig Sty? I asked, and was directed to the core of the group: Cesspool Computing. "No, that's not Cesspool!" I cried, pointing to a delightful young man in a suit who looked like Paul McCartney during his Beatle days. However, instead of Liverpool, Cesspool had his beginnings in Cleveland (no sewer jokes please — someone in Cleveland may read this). Together with Head Swine he began the Pig Sty while working at a Navy base. The club has its own computer bulletin board with software which runs on a Novation Apple-Cat modem. They even have their own Electronic Mail to send private messages (anything to beat the postal increase). However, the Pig Sty is a private BBS for members only. Passwords and the phone number are secret (talk about secret: I offered my phone number in exchange for theirs, but they didn't go for it). When I asked why, Head Swine rolled his eyes back and said, "So no one can *hog* the system." (Well, I asked for that one.)

After a couple more introductions (no one uses his real name — only his "handle": e.g. The Shadow, Horse, and One Eye), dinner was announced ("oinked" actually).

The smell of roast beef began to fill the air (at least I knew the Pig Sty wasn't made up of cannibals) and we sat down for dinner. Now for the juicy stuff, I figured, and decided that the right time to get these guys to talk was when their mouths were full. I was right.

Between the mashed potatoes and the chocolate cake I found out who the Pig Sty really are. The names of the members are:...

CRASH! BOOM! SIZZLE!

Oh — oh, there goes my program...my disk slipped, my floppie flopped and mein computer ist kaput. Okay, so they warned me this would happen if I revealed their identities.

But if you promise not to tell anybody... here's what I *did* find out about some of the members.

Cesspool Computing is not only a master of sleight-of-hand with computers, he is also a respected magician at Hollywood's Magic Castle. He became interested in computer graphics as part of his study of magic and started writing software programs with the Head Swine. Currently, he works full time for a computer distributor.

Horse is a sharp businessman who owns a neddlecraft company that sells kits to big chains like J.C. Penney. He began using computers for his business and became interested in them as a hobby. His "hobby" now takes him to such exotic places as the Orient to bring the latest technology to his fellow Swine.

The **Head Swine** is a rising star in the world of computer software. Along with Cesspool, he began the Pig Sty about four years ago. Now married to a lovely blonde, he recently began marketing his own software after many years of hard work that actually began when he was a teenager (he's now an old pirate of twenty-five).

Datatect is an architect who gave up his drafting table for his computer screen. This technical Bernini actually designs buildings on his computer. (Can you imagine designing the Colosseum in bits and bytes?)

E.T. (no relation to the little fellow who forgot his long distance phone number) is a rugged looking engineer who discovered computers in his business, but now uses them as a toy. He enjoys the intellectual excitement found in the Pig Sty's varied bulletin board.

The **City Slicker** is a gentleman of letters — literally. He runs a book binding business. His interest in computers also grew out of his work, but he has expanded it into more than a hobby. In fact, he is now taking over the Sty. Computing right along with him is **Mrs. City Slicker.** This elegant lady looks like she would be more at home having the First Lady to tea instead of hacking away on a keyboard, but that's exactly what she does each day. From games to home business, she works right along with her husband on one of their many computers.

Actually, I found many ladies working alongside their men. Girlfriends and wives share their interest in this world that has neglected the fair sex. Actually, there is only one woman in the Pig Sty, known simply as **She**. (She wasn't at the Pig Fest — home computing, I'm sure.)

This group was becoming more interesting by the minute. But only one woman in the group? I was beginning to wonder if perhaps they *did* ship off the unwanted members of the female sex to Shanghai — especially female guests...

I decided not to worry about it. No matter what happened I was in trouble. If I didn't come up with a good story, my editor would see about a one way ticket to the South Pole, and if I spilled the pork and beans about the Pig Sty...well, I could always hire a bodyguard.

I was about to pack up my recorder and sneak out the back door when I heard that the two fellows who were part of the Cracker gang were here. I couldn't go home without meeting them. Were they one-eyed with big, black beards? Strong language and strong breath reeking with gin? Peg-legged and piggish?

I couldn't have been more surprised.

I found them huddled in a corner trying to hide behind a computer — drinking Seven-Up. Seven-Up? Captain Kidd would have choked on his rum. Were these two good-looking all-American kids really part of the Cracker gang? Indeed, they were.

I hesitated to introduce myself, but Corsair and his partner (he wouldn't even give me his handle) already knew who I was. These two young men were, shall we say, invited by the FBI to share their secret of how they cracked Telenet by breaking into its 1200 computer. They dialed in one number which gave them access to 1200 computers to play with. Then by typing in another number (an area code and a computer number), you connect with somebody else's computer line. For example, if you type in 30...(send all bribes care of MICROTIMES for the rest of the secret number), you are on the source, and according to Corsair, then the fun begins. The fun stopped for these two then-seventeen-year-olds when the FBI confiscated their computers. Now that they can vote (and go to jail) they are pursuing careers in engineering and medicine.

Well, I had the story I had come for. It was time to leave and brave the hailing storm outside. I pulled my cape closer around me, guarding my tape recorder as if it were as precious as pirate's gold. The plush carpet under my feet silenced my soggy high heels as I made my way to the exit. Just a couple more steps ...

"The time has come, Miss Bacarr..." The City Slicker tapped me on the shoulder. I turned. I knew that look in his eye. The jig was up. Suddenly, the Head Swine appeared out of a dark corner and together they "escorted" me back to my table. This was the moment I had feared. Now that I had their secrets recorded for future pirates, they were going to make sure that the secret stayed with me. Did the Inn have a bottomless swimming pool, and would I have to walk the plank? Or worse, was I about to become a permanent part of the Pirates of the Caribbean ride at nearby Disneyland?

I held my chin high. Whatever my fate, I was determined to take it like a true MICROTIMES Writer: I would swallow my tape before I would give it up.

"Fellow Swine," the City Slicker addressed the group and I waited for the end. "Our guest is an expert — I looked it up in the dictionary, 'ex' meaning 'has been...' " (Here it comes, I thought.) "And 'spert' — rip under pressure ...." (Was I to be drawn and quartered?)

He continued. "We have a special presentation for our guest." He then presented me with a plaque making me an Honorary Swine.

Me? An Honorary Swine? Hold on to your pigtails, it's true! These gentlemen and ladies bestowed upon me their highest honor. I was flattered, dumbfounded — and speechless. Could this really be happening to me? The student who took Computer Science in college because the teacher was tall, dark and hand-

Jina Bacarr

some? The writer who, a couple of years ago, thought Wordstar was a new Saturday morning cartoon show?

I accepted the plaque and talked to the group for a few minutes about my adventures in the world of laserdisc games (the Pig Sty members don't clap to show their appreciation: they squeeze their handsize piglet stuffed animals who squeak with delight). However, they are an attentive and appreciative group, dedicated to sharing their knowledge and just some plain good ole hacking.

As I looked out over the motley group I thought about their various backgrounds. From engineers to students to businessmen, they had opened up their hearts and taken in a poor writer from out of the rain. I knew this was the beginning of a whole new program for me in the world of computers.

I gathered up my plaque and other "piggy" paraphernalia and headed home, knowing I'll never forget the Pig Sty and each individual Swine member.

How can I? I'm one of them now. ■

PETER McWILLIAMS SPEAKS OUT

On computer wars, market trends, and practically everything else

By Jeff Spurrier

With five different book titles and over 850,000 copies sold, Peter McWilliams ranks as one of the best-selling computer literature authors ever. His latest book, *Personal Computers for the Disabled,* is due out from Doubleday this winter and will be followed in the spring by a *Peter McWilliams Buyer's Guide to Personal Computers.* All of McWilliams' books are noted for a chatty informal style which effectively de-mystifies the technological aura that surrounds micro computers. Anti-trendy and avidly pro-consumer, McWilliams has risen to the forefront of computer literature by maintaining a unique perspective that is disarmingly humorous as well as informative. His opinionated reviews of various systems have made him something of a gadfly in the micro industry, for, unlike many computer writers, he refuses to take the wonders of high-tech all that seriously.

It's been three years since The Word Processing Book. *How have things changed? What are the latest trends you've noticed?*

The new trends that I've noticed are things like laser printers. They're going to be the big thing in 1985. It's the first exciting thing to happen to printers in a long time. They're fast and good and they're going to be cheaper. Now they're just in the range of office use. The [IBM] PC Jr. is making a huge comeback. IBM is making a big play for the home and educational market.

There's this funny thing going on between Apple and IBM. Apple has the school and home market sewn up and they keep trying to get involved with business. IBM has the business market sewn up and they keep trying to get involved with home management and education. Now Apple, instead of continuing to establish themselves in the home and school by selling the MacIntosh cheaper—and I mean a lot cheaper—are instead trying to beef up the MacIntosh to compete with IBM—which is crazy. They'll never make it. So IBM has a good chance of being established in the education market. A very small percentage of the computers that are going to be purchased for educational use in the next ten years are already out there. Schools feel comfortable working with IBM just as everybody does.

How do you feel about working with IBM? In your first books you used to make fun of IBM . . .

I did use to kid the company. I don't own an IBM. [He uses an Epson QX-10 and an Epson Geneva lap computer.] IBM clearly won the battle in the business market very soon after they entered it. Their operating system has become the standard. Everyone imitates their machines. All the software comes out first in IBM format. IBM and the compatibles really *are* the personal computers right now, especially for business and people who want to play around with computers. I see the MacIntosh as kind of a Yuppie toy. The people for whom the the money doesn't matter buy them and think they're fun—like they buy Porsches and Maseratis and BMWs and think they're fun. I don't see it as being a corporate tool the way that Apple seems to be marketing. it.

What is your view of other smaller computers that are on the market? I'm thinking of the higher priced portable lap computers.

I don't consider those heavier computers all that portable. A ten or eleven pound computer is too heavy for general use. All those $3,000 IBM compatible machines are very heavy. It might be nice to have one in the back of your limo but most of us don't have limos. There's a place for them in the executive market but not for real life people.

There are predictions of massive growth in the lap computer market. Do you agree with that?

I think so, but you have to decide what that market is. I think [a computer] has to be less than five pounds and around $1,000. Keep it around there and there will be an ongoing market of journalists, writers and students. These $3,000 door-stops have a market but I wouldn't put them in the market of truly portable computers.

You just came out with a new book, Personal Computers and the Disabled. *What was the impetus behind that?*

The whole idea was that there are 36 million disabled people in this country, and computers are remarkably practical tools to help that group of people communicate or work. Basically they're enabling tools in the same way that wheelchairs or hearing aids or eyeglasses are. These are things that enable people that have what might be considered disabilities to be more active or productive. I kept waiting for someone to write something about it and no one ever did, so I did. After the fact, I found there's a real prejudice in book stores against books about the disabled. They think they don't sell, so they don't

order them, so they don't sell. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Is the micro shakeup affecting the computer literature world as much as people claim?

Oh, absolutely! I remember when I reviewed the first Kaypro a few years ago. I sent someone down to Kaypro. They picked the first computer off the assembly line, brought it up to me. I spent the night with it, reviewing it. It was returned the next morning and I wrote the review and stuck it in the book and it was in the bookshelves about 2 weeks later. I think I was the first person to review the Kaypro. And now people worry about companies going out of business [before a review comes out]. We're putting this [new] book together and we're leaving question marks on certain pages. Will this company be in business by the time we're in print? The same thing is going on with computer books and magazines. The number of magazines that have folded is incredible.

Why is that happening?

There's too many. This has happened over and over. I don't know why people don't get smart. It's the me-too syndrome. Imitating success. The market is the same size. Look at *PC*. At one time it was the thickest magazine ever sold. It had more ad pages than any magazine ever. One thousand ad pages in a one month issue or something. All the other magazine people hear this and start adding up the profits and soon everyone comes out with a *PC*-like magazine. Soon you have 100 magazines all trying for the same piece of the pie. There are too many competitors.

The same is true of computer books. Everybody was publishing when they heard how well computer books were doing. But there isn't a need for that many computer books. How many books do you need on how to program in BASIC? Or to tell you about *1-2-3?* So you have all these imitative books out there, and these big publishing companies with clout to get them on the shelves, and they sell a few copies. It's not because people aren't interested in that subject. It's because there are also 20 other books on exactly the same subject on the shelves. So there's been a big shake-up. Various organizations are closing down their computer divisions. It's like the first crock-pot cookbook sold like crazy, and then everyone came out with crock-pot cookbooks, which didn't sell at all. Then they all went out of the crock-pot cookbook business, and now the original crock-pot cookbook sells like crazy. That's what happened in computer books. Everyone got in, and now they're all getting out, and a few books will remain, and they'll be the standard.

Aside from the shake-out, do you notice any other changes in computer literature?

I think everyone is assuming that the reader is more intelligent—about computer issues that is—not intelligent generally. There's an obsession with business orientation. Everyone wants to cater to that business market. That again is a type of stupidity. Even if it is the biggest market, not everyone can cater to it. There's still a large market for other types of computing. There's still room for specialty magazines. Isn't the thrill of a magazine to introduce new information to a certain group of people? Most magazines become more specialized: *Indiana Gardener, American Beekeeper.* But meanwhile computer magazines tend to get more and more generalized, which I think is crazy. They should focus on a very narrow market. There should be magazines for each user, for each computer. There should be magazines for each type of user like for word processing or accounting. That also gives companies a chance to advertise and they don't have to do the market surveys. There should be a magazine for farming and computers, for lawyers and computing. Right down the line. Every profession that uses computing should have its own magazine. Instead, everyone is trying to be general. Meanwhile small computer magazines—like *Twin Cities Computing* which only deals with computing in the Minneapolis/Twin Cities area—are doing very well. Everyone that has a computer in that area buys it because it meets their specific needs. It talks about local user groups and stores and where to get the best prices on certain software.

What are your recommendations these days in terms of computers?

It really depends on what you want to do. There are a lot of good values but first you have to know what you want to do with it. For just word processing, the Kaypro is still the winner.

You think so?

Oh, absolutely. The prices just keep going down. You can now get a complete system with software and printer—nothing else to buy—for $1500 retail, so from the discount houses it can be as little as $1300. It's just an amazing buy. There's no excuse for buying a big electric typewriter anymore. That thrills me because it makes such an impact on writing. I'm so glad that someone is providing a good, no-frills tool for writers. If you're interested in the future of computing and playing around and getting all the state of the art stuff, then there's nothing to get but an IBM. If you've involved with business and want it for that, then also get an IBM. If you're interested in educational uses, then the Apple IIe is probably the best bet because there's so much software written for it. The Coleco Adam for the home is terrific. For general use on a higher end I'd choose the IBM PC Jr. over the Apple.

You're talking about the Apple IIc? Why do you say that? It's turning out to be one of the most popular machines Apple makes.

No one should ever buy a IIc for any reason except portability. I can't figure out why people want it. It's not expandable. It's not all that portable. The reason Apple is pushing it is because it costs them a lot less to make.

I get angry at Apple sometimes. They keep pushing the wrong machines on the right market. They should push the IIe to the home and school markets, not the IIc. They keep pushing the MacIntosh on business and they shouldn't. It doesn't belong in business except in a handful of businesses like graphics places.

It sounds as though you're saying that IBM has essentially won the war . . .

Yeah, maybe they have. But if they've won, it's not because they're IBM but because everyone is making things for them. IBM is like what Apple was several years ago. It's funny. Once IBM was famous for their closed systems. You could void the warranty on your Selectric typewriter just by using a non-IBM ribbon, while at the same time Apple got the reputation for being an open system. They invited other people to write software for them. You could plug in cards, add different things. Now Apple computers are all closed, and IBMs are all open. The IIc and the MacIntosh and the Lisa are all closed systems. That's where Apple is going. IBM, on the other hand, has the PC, and PC Jr. and the AT, all of which are very open systems, and they're encouraging people to do things and add on to their system. It's ironic.

I found out in doing the book on the disabled that IBM has 15 people full time who do nothing but arrange for computers to be used by disabled people. Apple has one person. The irony is that Apple has this reputation that they push very heavily of being a warm cuddly company for everybody, and IBM has the image of being Big Brother. The fact is that IBM does an awful lot more for the humanities than Apple does. Also, when IBM improved the keyboard on the Jr. they gave it away for free to people who had bought the PC Jr. When Apple increased the MacIntosh from 128K to 512K, they charged people $1000 for an upgrade.

What are your recommendations in the IBM clone field?

Well, the Compaq is still the clone of choice. IBM's portable is not very thrilling. Radio Shack is doing terrific stuff. They have these wonderful IBM compatible computers that are very cheap. And you can buy them anywhere. What a great idea! God knows they have the backing to stay in business. That alone gives you an idea how clearly IBM has won the war. For Radio Shack—who was in home computers before IBM was and has their own operating system and thousands of user clubs—to turn around and put all their backing into these IBM compatible computers is terrific. That's smart marketing and good consumerism. They're offering a computer that uses all the software and peripherals at a very low cost. I think it's one of the brightest things to happen in a long time. ■

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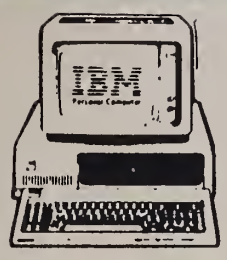

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REVIEWS

BOOKS

THE FREE SOFTWARE HANDBOOK

1984-85 CP/M Edition
By: T.G. Platt, P.L. Hatcher, and B.H. van Meter
Published by: PeopleTalk Associates, Inc., Plano, TX

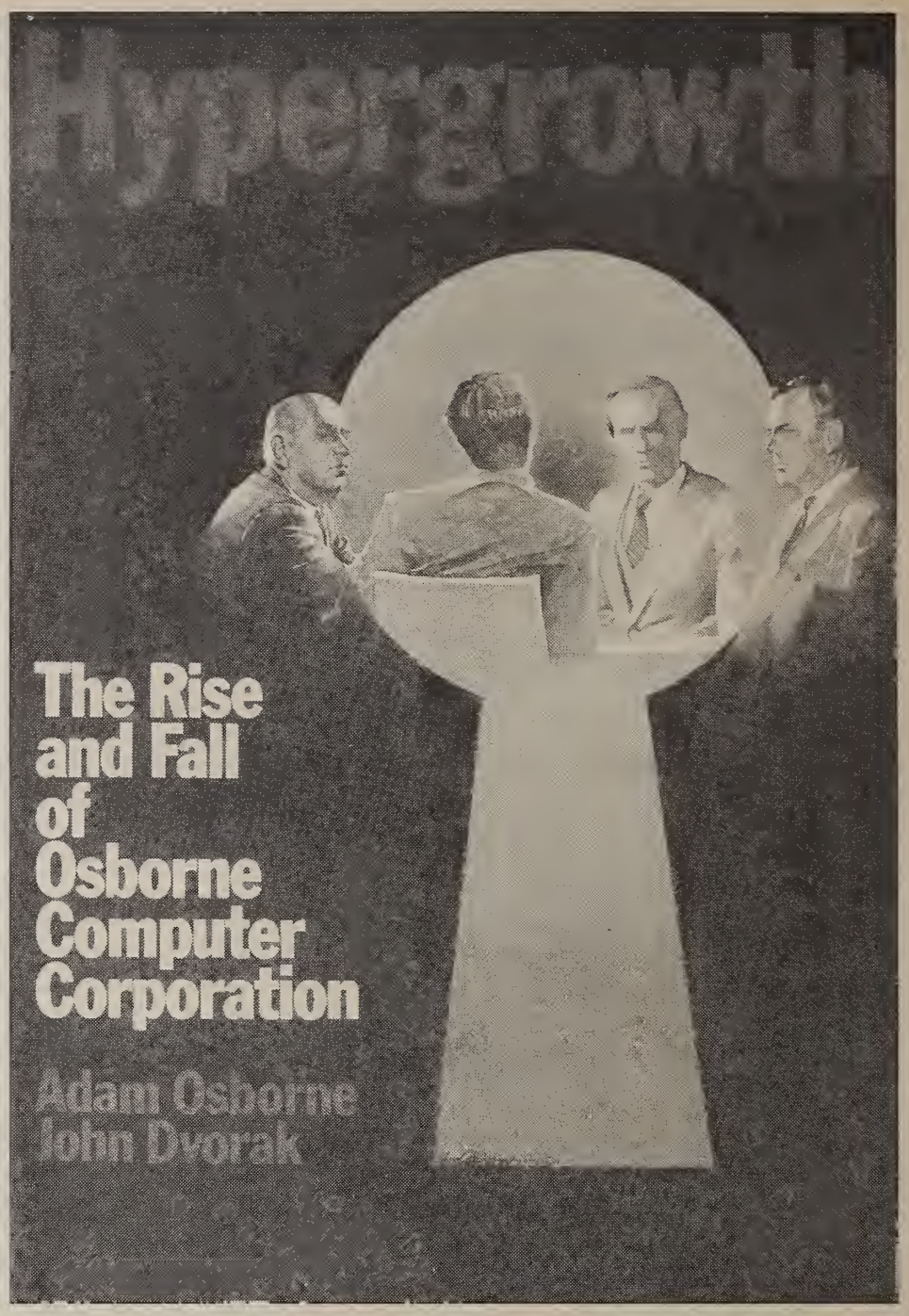
I requested the loan of this book primarily because I consider the CP/M systems shabbily treated by the "mainline" computer magazines and newswriters. One can always find writeups on the latest out for Apple or IBM. However, in this book we have a somewhat more broadly useful selection aimed specifically at the CP/M systems. Kaypros are mentioned most, but some Osborne and other types are touched on as well.

The key point is the writers are after *good* software for the CP/M systems that can be obtained at a reasonable price — a few dollars from a user group library or from a BBS dump. They have organized their book into ten major sections, trying to take the neophyte through the forest identifying the fruitful trees. Their coverage of the games is brief but informative. I was surprised *CASTLE* did not make their list, but *TRADE*, *STRTRK*, and *ADVenture* (my favorites) did. The authors are somewhat chatty (10+ pages) in their discussion of some very useful programs, such as *NSW205* (*Newsweep*) and *DU-V86* (*Disk Utility*), but with very helpful example of what the programs can do and how they are used. Unfortunately, few programs get such lucid treatment. I'd like to have seen that treatment on *ZCPR2*, which got less than six pages. (Perhaps the authors felt that the HELP options in *ZCPR* are extensive enough for the fledgling technophobe.)

An interesting, rather foreshortened segment of the book deals with interviews of the program writers of these classics, and some popular BBS SYSOPs. I'd have liked to see each get four pages, rather than about four paragraphs. Indeed, that might make an interesting book in itself.

All in all, I recommend the book as a reference for those who get the programs from a users group or BB. It would be useful in choosing which programs to buy, and useful thereafter in guiding usage for some of them. I hope there are updates, and that the authors settle on a style that continues the exemplary lucidity and detail of their discussion of *NewSWeeP*.

— Robert D. Athey, Jr.



HYPERGROWTH
The Rise and Fall of the Osborne Computer Corporation

By: Adam Osborne and John Dvorak
Published by: Idthekkethan Publishing Company, Berkeley, CA

The rise of the Osborne Computer Corporation was one of the most remarkable success stories of the early eighties. The decline and eventual demise of the company was not only a shock to the computing community, but an event shrouded in mystery to the public at large and financial analysts in particular. A company that had been perceived as a first rank competitor with Apple and IBM suddenly, and for no externally apparent reason, went bankrupt.

The full story of what happened behind the scenes at Osborne Computer will probably never be known; the "facts" are highly subjective at best and subject to multiple interpretations. To add to the problems, the key figures of the corporation are, for the most part, staying silent out of fear of libel suits and other legal actions.

This has not deterred Adam Osborne, who, in cooperation with John Dvorak, a noted industry analyst, researched the fate of the company that bore his name, and wrote a book about their findings. Because of threats of legal action against the originally intended publisher, Osborne opted to publish the book himself, and thereby stands squarely behind his conclusions. To date, no suits have been filed against him.

The book itself is a wonderful piece of work. It relates the story of the origin of Osborne Computer, its life and hard times, and its unfortunate end, as well as some of Osborne's more salient comments and critiques of the computer industry as it is and as he predicts it will be in the future. At the same time, the book reads like a well crafted mystery novel, full of suspense, intrigue, and plot twists, while maintaining its integrity as a historical document, with annual reports and company spreadsheets included in the text and as appendices.

All in all, this is a riveting book, well suited to the hacker, investor, entrepreneur, and anybody else remotely interested in the inner workings of the computer industry. For that matter, *Hypergrowth* gives an amazing insight into the way that all products are created in the U.S., from fantasy to foible to finished product. In the admittedly dull realm of computer books, this is concrete proof that you don't have to have a chip on your shoulder (let alone in your head) to understand and enjoy the machinations of the micro evolution.

—Ken Goehner

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REVIEWS

GAME SOFTWARE

ZIGGURAT

Published by: Screenplay
Designed by: Randall Don Masteller
For: Apple II, Atari, Commodore 64

Ziggurat is a fantasy role-playing game. It takes place in a maze of corridors and rooms inside the pyramid of the dreaded Zombie King. Your mission, should you decide to play this game, is to find the tomb of the Zombie King and remove the treasure hidden there.

It won't be easy. As you explore the maze, you encounter monsters of various descriptions. Sometimes you may be able to evade the monsters by running (if you wish). Other times you will have to fight for your life.

The game is played by one person against the computer. After a few initial menus, the screen shows the player a map of the first level of the maze. At first, the map is blank except for the area immediately surrounding the player's character. As the character moves around, the map is filled in with walls, doors, rooms, tunnels, etc. The player controls the character's movements by typing in commands such as MOVE EAST. Changing levels in the maze is accomplished by having the character enter a tunnel. Of course, each level is different.

As the character explores the maze, he randomly encounters various types of monsters in various quantities. When this happens, the computer screen will show an enlarged map of the character's immediate surroundings. The player now has a number of tactics to choose from: RUN, MOVE, HIT, KICK, TURN, EVADE, etc. The chances for success of a given tactic in a particular situation depend on the character's experience, equipment, and magic as well as the monsters' abilities. The monsters use the same tactics against the player's character. If the character escapes or destroys the monsters, then the screen returns to the map of the maze and play continues. If the monsters kill the character, the game is over.

Ziggurat contains a tremendous amount of detail. There are forty-five distinct types of monsters ranging from dogs to the Zombie King himself. Each type of monster has its own peculiar strengths and weaknesses. Treasures that may be found in various rooms include eight types of magic potions, eight types of magic rings and six types of magic wands. Each magical device has methods of operation, particular situations in which it is useful, and in some cases, a tendency to backfire. The documentation gives some hints, but most of these characteristics must be learned by trial and error.

Games and/or characters may be saved for later play. An exciting feature of this game is that characters developed and saved in the other *Warriors of RAS* games (*Dunzhin*, *Kaiv*, and *Wylde*) can be transported to *Ziggurat* for play.

On the positive side, *Ziggurat* is quite challenging and complex enough to provide a tremendous quantity of entertainment. The quality of the programming is excellent, and considerable imagination was used in the creation of the fantasy world.

On the negative side, *Ziggurat* can be tedious at times. The fights with the monsters can go on and on if both sides are evenly matched. Also, it can be frustrating to see your character killed ten times in one evening. The map-oriented graphics are not very exciting.

This game is not for everyone. It is for people who want to explore an elaborate fantasy world and are willing to invest considerable time and thought.

— *Walt Grams*

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE

Designed by: Major Bill "Wild Bill" Stealey
Published by: MicroProse Software
For: Apple, Atari, C-64

Strike Eagle is a fast-moving simulation of air combat, set around the current period. The game should be of interest to any of several types of people. Pilots who have flown modern combat aircraft with Heads-Up-Displays (HUD) will recognize some of the concepts used in this game. Pilots who always wanted to fly a modern high mach number aircraft, and those of us who have dreamed of flight in an exciting motorcycle of the sky, will be enthralled at the chance to test drive the new F-15 US Air Force high performance fighter aircraft.

The upper half of your cockpit contains a view you would see in the real F-15 fighter. Through the canopy is the horizon. The terrain will be blue if over water or green if over land. A grid moves under you as you fly to give the feel of movement. As you turn, the horizon rolls in the opposite direction. When you approach and dive on land targets, you will note a gray triangle which represents the target.

Overlaid on your view of the canopy is the HUD, which provides you with references that help you fly in a rather abstract world. Not that the *Strike Eagle* game is abstract. Three-dimensional flight at high mach numbers is abstract whether you are flying the real thing or a simulator. The HUD has a grid representing 10 degrees per mark, which helps you choose your best angle for divebombing, climbing or simply maintaining the same altitude. The upper left hand corner registers current speed, the upper right hand corner your current altitude. Altitude must be watched carefully because in high speed dives you can lose sight of your relative position over the earth. Altitude is also important in the decision to dive for evasion purposes.

On the lower left of the display you are periodically given notes and messages. The ring in the center helps you zero in on your opponent with your 20mm cannon. When the bomb activation switch is thrown, a bomb sight appears in what would be the impact area with a line to the center of the flight marker. When the target is in line with the glide angle of the plane, the two markers will coincide, at which point you push the fire control on the joystick. The bomb will whistle as it falls. If the screen turns red, you hit the target, and a message will appear in the lower left flashing "target destroyed." When the missile arm switches are thrown, brackets will appear around the nearest enemy plane in your flight path with a large "m" in the center of the brackets. The Strike Eagle is armed with a short range heat seeking and a long range radar guided missile. You must estimate the distance to engage the target based on your rate of closure and the direction of attack. The radar guided missile requires that you keep the plane aimed toward the target until impact.

The lower half of the screen is divided into 3 parts. The left third is a view of the terrain around you 100 miles in each direction, including the location of all the primary targets, air bases, missile sites, and major landmarks. The center third is the radar. The radar can be set for long range, short range, or medium range. Long range radar allows you time to deal with distant threats long before they attack you. The short range radar helps you avoid a close-in missile via maneuver. The right third is a view of the underside of the plane, which helps you determine what ordnance you have remaining.

The situation in the first scenario portrays the *Nimitz* conducting exercises in the Gulf of Sidra off the coast of Libya. Due to claims by the Libyan government to the Gulf, the Libyans have been harassing the US Task Force. As a pilot for the US, you must fly combat air patrol over the gulf until you are attacked. After you have been attacked you will seek your primary target, which is marked on your onboard computer display. You are forewarned in the rules that you will be attacked by MiG-21's and MiG-23's.

The scenario contains a few anomalies, notably the idea that the F-15, a US Air Force plane, would be defending a Navy carrier, let alone landing and taking off from it. A small

complaint, admittedly, but players with knowledge of military aircraft will be bothered by this kind of inaccuracy in an otherwise near-perfect simulation.

As you take control of your Strike Eagle after selecting your skill level and number of players, you will be immediately faced with your first encounter. You start the game on the tail of a Soviet-made Su-22. You choose a weapon. Since you're at close range, use your gatling gun. Gatling guns require multiple hits to achieve a kill and are not difficult with practice. If you want to increase your chance of a first encounter kill, push the "s" key, which arms your short range missile. The aircraft computer will attempt to achieve a lock-on and signal this occurrence by placing brackets around the position of the enemy aircraft on your HUD, with an "M" in the display to signify a missile lockon. After all this has been done you push the fire button on your joystick when you are ready. Your view will be a small missile-shaped object being ejected forward, apparently from the underside of your Strike Eagle. The word "under" here is a relative term if you are flying upside down. You will be able to track the progress of the missile in several ways. You can see it on your radar. You can observe it through your canopy and HUD as another bracketed missile marker. You will also see the missile you have just fired removed from your view of the bottom of the Strike Eagle.

The game has seven increasingly difficult scenarios. Each time you complete your mission and survive, or when all the primary targets in any scenario are destroyed, you advance to the next level.

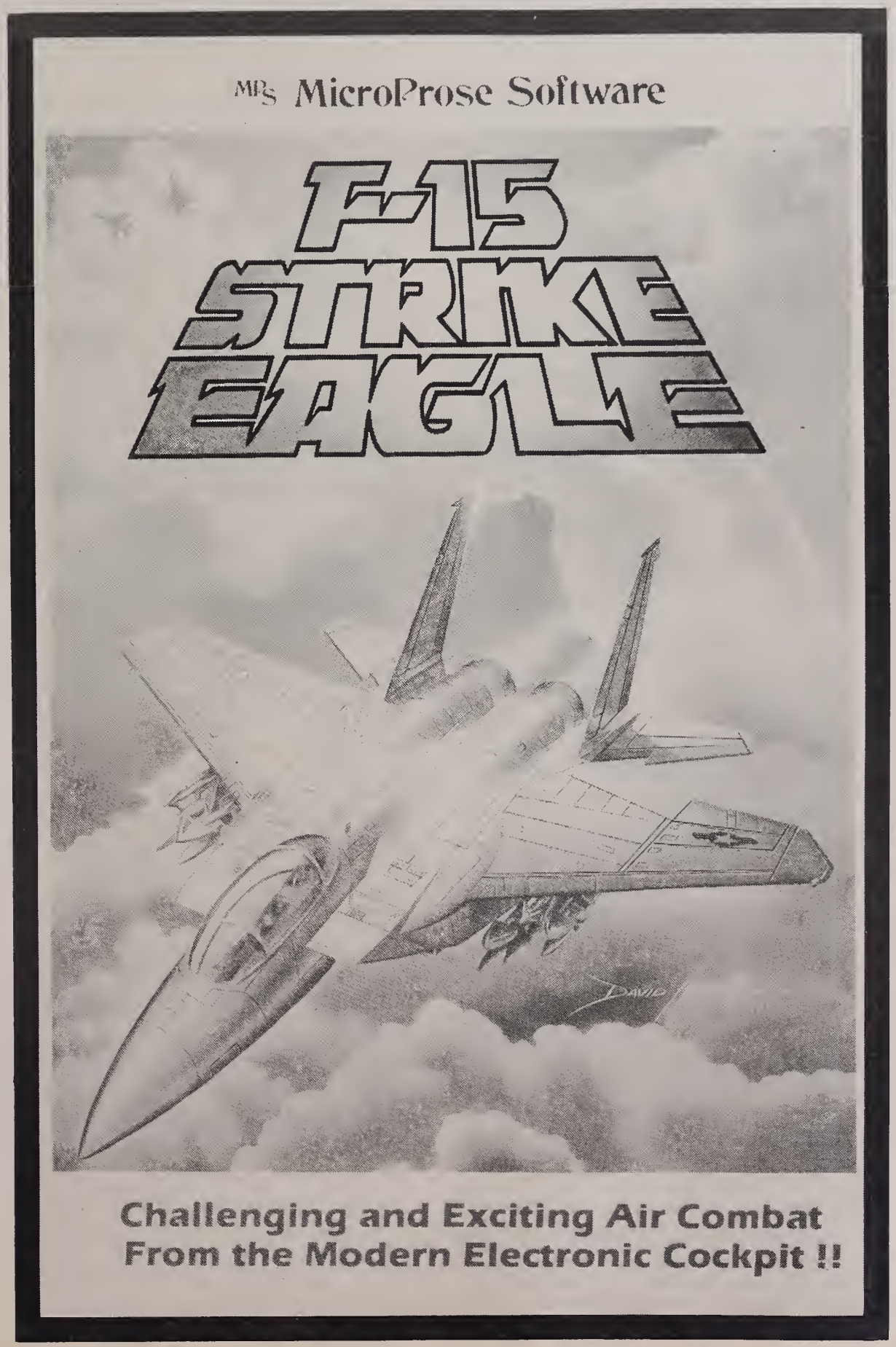
Sometimes the primary target cannot be destroyed in a single attack and must be approached in a repetitive multiple attack mode. In many cases you must attack the SAM sites between you and the primary target. These SAM sites can be bombed, destroyed, and removed from the map. On the next flight you can pick another adjacent SAM or Airbase and destroy it, repeating this tactic until a path has been cleared to the primary target. In each of these situations you may fly back to your base where you are refueled, rearmed, and repaired before the next attack.

As you receive damage, the plane flies poorly and becomes hard to control. The plane tends to roll, pitch and yaw in random directions and must be continually attended to in order to maintain controlled flight. After taking a single hit you will generally be able to return to your base, assuming you can ward off attackers on your return flight in your weakened condition. If you have more than one hit you will find it very difficult to fly. Three or four hits and you are as likely to crash into your base as to land on it. You might want to parachute — a desperate move as the odds of survival are only 50/50.

The game can be played at one of four different levels. Arcade is the simplest, because the player does not have to contend with rolling. The horizon remains level and will be less confusing to the novice. The Rookie, Pilot, and Ace versions all use the same rules and appear the same. However, the attack of enemy fighters and missiles is far more relentless and frequent at Ace level.

The bottom line is a great game and a great simulation. I might even go so far as to say that you could justify a computer just to fly a Strike Eagle.

— Don Hamilton



USER GROUP NOTES

As we start the new year, a number of fledgling user groups are looking for interested folks to join their ranks.

The Silicon Valley Cromemco Users Group, a relatively new group formed around this pioneer computer, has just held its first elections and meets on the second Tuesday of the month at MCM Enterprises, 215 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto. Meetings include discussions of various topics of interest to members, plus a general exchange of ideas, problem solving, etc. The December 11 meeting featured an address to the group by the vice-president of Cromemco. Contact Ken Brown at (415) 327-8080 for more information.

The Bay Area Vector User Group attracted a healthy turnout at its second meeting on December 13th and is anxious to spread the word. Vector users sometimes find themselves in an isolated position, according to founder Peter Tjeerdsma, because the Thousand Oaks-based company decided to expend its resources on research and development rather than advertising. Consequently, while the machines are among the best available, dealers are few and far between, and parts and repairs can be a real problem. This user group plans to use the mutual resources of members to combat these difficulties. Current group activities include gathering and disseminating information, problem solving sessions, copying of public domain software, discussions of ways to set up data communications between Vectors and other computer systems, and seminars in Vector's business programs, Memowrite and Execuplan. The group is in the process of creating a questionnaire for members on their particular problems and possible solutions; the results will be compiled in a directory of members, setting up a phone support network. If there is sufficient interest, says Tjeersdma, the group will also pool its financial resources to set up a stock of spare parts. If this group sounds like the answer to your prayers, or if you feel that you might have something to contribute, call him at (415) 681-0308.

Meanwhile, CEO (Community Entrepreneurs Organization), also welcomes inquiries. CEO is neither new nor a user group per se — it's a business networking group with subgroups on business-oriented computer use. CEO has chapters in Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco and San Jose; they publish a regular newsletter which includes computer news, and also sponsor various activities of interest to members and the community. Among their frequent seminars and workshops is a program on "How to Computerize Your Business." Another program, "How to Start a Business," might be of interest to cottage computer entrepreneurs. For further information, contact Rick Crandall at (415) 435-4461, or write to CEO, P.O. Box 2781, San Rafael, CA 94912.

Epson users in search of kindred spirits will be pleased to learn that there's a host of local user groups statewide. See our listings for a group in your area.

Ashton-Tate's *FRAMEWORK* has won lots of converts since its debut last year. Among them is Rudi Wiedemann, who, not content with recruiting most of his co-workers as *FRAMEWORK* devotees, conceived the brilliant notion of starting a user group based on the popular system. The group, dubbed FRED-BUG, will initially be aimed at the business and technical professional, with the purpose of sharing various practical routines and applications that members have worked out. (Since *FRAMEWORK* is programmable, the individual variations and brainstorms are likely to be numerous and useful.) If you're a *FRAMEWORK* missionary, or just want to know more, call Rudi at (408) 730-4159. He promises to get back to all callers.

CAL-SEC, based in Berkeley, is a newly-formed organization which held its first meeting in late December. It's a mutual assistance league of computer-related high-tech consultants. If you're a consultant working on contract, you may have discovered that while the situation might be idyllic in terms of flexibility and pay, it also creates new problems. CAL-SEC envisions itself as a statewide, action-oriented group addressing problems peculiar to the contract work situation. Among CAL-SEC's initial plans are setting up a group insurance plan for members, forming support groups statewide, holding educational workshops to discuss consultants' problems and opportunities, and working out paradigms of special contract plans. If this sounds like it could do you some good, write CAL-SEC, 3046 College Ave. #4, Berkeley, CA 94705.

If your group is sponsoring some activity that you'd like publicized, let us know and we'll help get the word out. Listings and newsreel items should be received by the 20th of the month *preceding* the issue in which you want them to appear. (Generally speaking, MicroTimes is distributed around the second week of the month, so if your event occurs before that, let us know *early*.) Write or call: MicroTimes User Group Notes, 5951 Canning St., Oakland, CA 94609, (415) 652-3810, attn. Mary Eisenhart. (Photos are also welcome — they're likeliest to be usable if they're black-and-white glossy.)

USER GROUP LISTINGS

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

SOUTH BAY APPLE III USER GROUP
The Apple III is alive and well in Southern California. Come join us on the IIIrd Tuesday of each month. Product demos and discussions and more. Meeting address 1000 Victoria Avenue, Room #SC-E157, Carson, 7:30 pm, IIIrd Tuesday. Contact Gary, P.O. Box 432, Redondo Beach, CA 90277, (213) 316-7738.

AT&T 6300
West LA: AT&T 6300 or 8086 compatible (desk pro) group forming. Contact Miles Hillis, (213) 472-3522, leave name and interest.

CLUB 64
National user group. Monthly newsletter, BBS, group purchasing, public domain software, much more. Contact: Robert Johnson, (213) 925-4049.

COMMUNITY ENTREPRENEURS ORGANIZATION (CEO)
Business networking group meets around SF area. Invests in new products, markets, brainstorms. Share info. on tech and non-tech business issues. 4 meeting locations, various week nights. Contact Dr. Crandall, P.O. Box 2781, San Rafael, CA 94912.

CURSOR CLUB — EPSON
402 W. Arrow Highway, Suite 6
San Dimas, CA. 91773
(714) 599-8361
Bulletin Board: (714) 592-6316

FOOTHILL EPSON USER GROUP
Meets fourth Tuesday of the month at 3132 Foothill Blvd., La Crescenta. All types of micros are welcome. Demonstrations, discussions, newsletters, BBS, etc. For info contact: Jerry Jamriska, 2960 Hawkridge Dr., La Crescenta, CA 91214. (818) 248-7133.

EPSON USERS GROUP OF ORANGE COUNTY
6075 Jeffrey Mark Street
Cypress, CA. 90630
(213) 414-4817

EPSON USERS OF SAN DIEGO
P.O. Box 87448
San Diego, CA. 92138
(619) 560-7604

HIGH DESERT EPSON USERS GROUP
933 Cottonwood Drive
Barstow, CA. 92311
(619) 256-3541

PSC/QX
2934 Wilshire Blvd.
Santa Monica, CA. 90403
(213) 453-4535
Bulletin Board: (213) 474-4952

SOUTH BAY EPSON USERS GROUP
1115 Cerise Avenue
Torrance, CA. 90503
(213) 328-9916
Bulletin Board: (213) 618-1940

GAMENET
Bulletin Board System. BBS is devoted 100% to gaming subjects. 24 hours, 20 boards, 10 D&D/RPG boards, Alkahest, professional book reviews, Unending Story, Adventurers Training Ground, Game Hint, etc. Sysop: L.J. Phone: (213) 541-8039.

CLUB OF HEWLETT-PACKARD HAND-HELD USERS (CHHU)

The true personal computer is small enough to always be conveniently with the user. CHHU, pronounced "chew," is dedicated to the ultimate personal computer. Membership is $30/yr. You will receive 10 issues of the CHHU Chronicle. Meetings are announced in the CHHU Chronicle, or contact Richard J. Nelson, 2545 W. Camden Ave., Santa Ana, CA 92704. (714) 754-7757.

SOUTH BAY COLOR COMPUTER CLUB

TRS-80, TDP-100, Dragon. Meets third Friday of the month at Mercury Savings, 22939 Hawthorne Blvd., Torrance. Info: Andrew Corlett, 1435 W. 172nd St., Gardena, CA 90247. (213) 538-8394.

LA 99ER COMPUTER CLUB

TI 99/4A support, classes and SIGs, large software library, monthly newsletter. Demonstrations, bulk purchase discounts on hardware, software and books. A good group to join. Meetings at Torrance Public Library, 3031 Torrance Blvd., Torrance, CA. 4th Wednesday of the month, 7 pm. Contact Terrie Masters, 148 S. Maple Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90212, (213) 271-6930.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

SAN FRANCISCO APPLE CORE

Meets every third Saturday of the month at Fort Mason, Bldg. C, Room 100 at 10 am. New products and innovations are featured for Apple II, Apple III, Macintosh and Lisa. Public domain library, SIGs, tech help, newsletter. $20 per year membership. Info: SF Apple Core, 1515 Sloat Blvd., Suite 2, San Francisco, CA 94132. (415) 566-2342 (voice), (415) 474-8608 (BBS/modem).

ABACUS (Atari Bay Area Computer Users Society)

All ATARI users or prospective users are welcome. Membership ($15/year) provides public domain software, low cost blank disks, monthly newsletter, group prices on hardware and software, help from experts, low cost classes for beginners. Meetings first Saturday of the month, Fort Mason, SF, Room 300, Bldg. C, 10 am-2 pm. Contact Bill Zinn, P.O. Box 1823, Mill Valley, CA 94941. (415) 753-8483.

20/64 CLUB

The Cupertino chapter of the 20/64 club for Commodore users meets the second Sunday of each month, Cupertino Public Library, 6 pm. Contact Rex Ackerman, P.O. Box 61063, Sunnyvale, CA 94086. Phone (408) 245-7270.

SAN FRANCISCO COMMODORE USERS GROUP

Public domain library, classes, tech help, in depth demonstrations, monthly newsletters, Epromer, savings on purchases, all this and more. BBS # (415) 567-5046 300 baud. Meeting address 256 Laguna Honda Blvd., San Francisco, 3rd Tuesday of the month, 7:30 pm. Contact Roger Tierce, 278 27th Ave. #102, SF, CA 94121, (415) 387-0225.

COMPUTER PROFESSIONALS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

P.O. Box 717, Palo Alto, CA 94301. (415) 322-3778.

COMPUTER PROFESSIONALS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (EAST BAY)

902 Rose Ave., Piedmont CA 94611. Contact Bruce Joffe, (415) 768-0288 days, (415) 654-5263 eves.

SILICON VALLEY CROMEMCO USERS

Meets 2nd Tuesday of the month at MCM Enterprises, 215 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, CA. Call Ken Brown at (415) 327-8080 for details.

BAY AREA EPSON SALTS — EPSON

125 Del Centro
Millbrae, CA. 94030
(415) 697-0567

EPSON USERS OF SAN FRANCISCO

904 Irvine Street, Suite 271
San Francisco, CA. 94122
(415) 661-9270

NAPA VALLEY EPSON USERS GROUP

1307 Hestia Way
Napa, CA. 94558
(707) 253-8727

SANTA ROSA KUG

Owners of Kaypro computers or CP/M systems are invited to join the SRKUG. We conduct seminars and software instruction/training. Come join the fun. Meetings 3rd Thursday of the month at 7 pm. Call for meeting address: James Daniels, 1029 Damon Court, Santa Rosa, CA 95401, (707) 575-8149.

EAST BAY FOG (First Osborne Group)

Osborne, Kaypro and Morrow. Meets second Wednesday of the month at B&B Electric, 2832 Ford Street, Oakland. 6 pm workshops, 7:30 pm program. For info contact A Central Place, 477 15th St., Room 200, Oakland, CA 94612. (415) 834-7897.

NORTH BAY R2E

Forming user group for R2E System Microcomputer users. Please call (415) 235-1598 for information. First meeting will be held in El Cerrito in early November.

PC-HACKERS (International)

This 300-member, 16-page newsletter-publishing, PC-compatible group began as a Sanyo MSDOS club in March 1984. All PC-compatible owners are welcomed at our monthly First Wednesday meetings at 7 pm in the conference room of San Mateo's Fashion Island (Highway 92, east of 101). Dues: $30. Contact: PC Hackers, 12155 Edgecliff, Los Altos, CA 94022.

SANYO 1100/1200 USER GROUP

of the San Francisco Bay Area, P.O. Box 297, San Mateo, 8-10 pm, every 2nd Friday of month. Send large self-addressed stamped envelope for copy of newsletter.

SANYO MBC 1100-1150

user group now forming in Oakland. Call or write (415) 534-1981, 5885 Bancroft Ave., Oakland 94605 for meeting time and location.

BYTE BANDITS OF AMERICA

TRS-80's workshop computers club — bimonthly meetings — 2nd Saturday and 4th Wednesday of the month. Bring your computers. Free membership. Modem: (408) 374-3974. Meetings at 780 Many Ave., Campbell, CA. For info contact R.W. Brown, (408) 379-2774.

SAN FRANCISCO 99ERS

One General Meeting per month plus uncountable mini-meetings for training. Over 500 programs available in library. Meetings second Tuesday of the month, 6:30 pm, Texas Instruments Learning Center, SF. Contact Dick Altman, 1053 Shrader St., San Francisco. (415) 661-1994.

EAST BAY TIMEX/SINCLAIR USER GROUP (EBZUG)

Timex/Sinclair user group. S/W library and newsletter. Meets at West Branch of Berkeley Public Library at corner of University and San Pablo. Meets 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm. Contact Rick Link, 654 40th St., Richmond, CA 94805, (415) 234-3310.

PENINSULA TIMEX/SINCLAIR USER GROUP (PUG)

Timex/Sinclair user group. S/W library and newsletter. Meets at Peninsula Hospital, 1783 El Camino, Burlingame. Meets 3rd Sunday of the month at 1 pm. Contact George Mockridge, 263 Gateway #107, Pacifica, CA 94044, (415) 359-3198.

SILICON VALLEY TIMEX/SINCLAIR USER GROUP (SVTSUG)

Timex/Sinclair user group. S/W library and newsletter. Meets at Dysan Corp., 5201 Patrick Henry Drive, Santa Clara. Meets last Tuesday of the month at 7 pm. Contact Rita Carr, P.O. Box 4133, Santa Clara, CA 94044-0133, (408) 738-2888 ext. 45.

BAY AREA VECTOR GROUP

Meeting held regularly. Please call to be put on mailing list. You will be informed of next meeting! Contact Peter Tjeerdsma, 764 Cole St. #4, San Francisco, CA 94117. Phone (415) 681-0308.

EAST BAY VICTOR* GROUP

The East Bay Victor* Group (for users of Victor 9000's and ACT Apricot machines) meets at 7 pm the second Wednesday of every month at Monarch Computers, at 863C San Pablo Ave., Albany, CA. Public domain software usually available.

SAN FRANCISCO VICTOR* GROUP

The San Francisco Victor* Group meets at 4 pm the third Sunday of each month at La Bettola di Adolph Restaurant, corner of Broadway and Montgomery. Come early for public domain copying. Contact Darrell Bross, 254 Winding Way, San Francisco, CA 94112, (415) 586-5788.

SOUTH BAY VICTOR* GROUP

The South Bay Victor* Group meets at 7 pm at Computer Insights, 40957 Grimmer Blvd., Fremont, CA. Public domain software is usually available. Meetings are the first Tuesday of the month. Contact John Kimber, 38635 Drexel Court, Fremont, CA 94536, (415) 797-6423.

FRAMEWORK/EDITOR BAY AREA USERS GROUP (FREDBUG)

Purpose of the group is to share programming and applications techniques under FRAMEWORK for the business and technical professional. Call for info on first organizational meeting: Rudi Wiedemann, (408) 730-4159.

CALIFORNIA SOFTWARE ELECTRONIC CONSULTANTS (CAL-SEC)

California Software and Electronic Consultants Network. Support Groups — Workshops — Legal Referral — Newsletter. $30 Membership or SASE to CAL-SEC, 3046 College Ave. #4, Berkeley, CA 94705.

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FREE USER GROUP LISTINGS

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RETAIL/SERVICE NEWS

Ann and Gregory Chamberlain of SGC Computer Goods. Photo: Mary Eisenhart

SGC COMPUTER GOODS

700 Mowry Ave.
Fremont, CA
(415) 796-5950

"I have no illusions of being a fancy computer store with salesmen in pinstripe suits," says Ann Chamberlain of SGC Computer Goods. "We're a family computer store." She's not just referring to the store's extensive selection of home-oriented software: she and her husband Gregory run the business, assisted by their children Steven (buyer and salesman), Bridget (accounting and bookkeeping), and Jeffrey (technician). As a result, SGC is a comprehensive sales-and-service facility for hardware, peripherals and software, with a congenial, low-key approach to its customers.

The Chamberlains started their retail business with their own version of user-friendliness as a guiding principle. After successfully running a computer-and-accessory mail order business since 1980, Gregory (a former operations manager for Osborne Computer) and Ann decided to expand. Checking out the larger, chrome-plated stores, they discovered an environment distinctly hostile to the undecided, nonprofessional or small-purchase customer: high-pressure salesmanship and an elitist attitude that discouraged questions. As Gregory bluntly puts it, "Most places you go into, if you're not buying a $5000 system, they ignore you."

While the folks at SGC will be quite happy to sell you a $5000 system, they will also be perfectly content to sell you a diskette or a cable. If they don't have what you want in stock, they'll be glad to order it for you — at, Ann says, a very good price. Waiting time is almost always less than seven working days.

Ann finds that, since SGC is located in a residential neighborhood in Fremont, many of its customers are home computer users. SGC carries a substantial line of educational, game and home management software; the Chamberlains are also willing to spend time with the individual or family to determine the right system and software for their particular needs. "We're trying," Ann says, "to get away from that intimidating cold stereotype that you sometimes run into."

SGC also offers several specialized products and services. If you want to build your own computer, they have kits. If you've bought your system and can't seem to get it going, they'll send a consultant to your home or place of business to help. SGC's big innovation for 1985 is its new electronic mail shopping service: customers equipped with a home computer and modem will be able to dial up the store, browse its entire catalog and charge their purchases to VISA or MasterCard. Call the store for current information.

— Mary Eisenhart

SERVICELAND

1269 W. El Camino Real
Sunnyvale, CA 94086
(408) SER-VICE, (415) 962-9955

Into the life of every computer user there comes a moment when Old Faithful develops a problem. Bringing the machine in for service, the hapless owner frequently finds himself lost in a world that closely resembles the Twilight Zone, with overtones of *Catch-22*. "You didn't buy it here? Sorry . . ." "But you voided your warranty when you added on the XYZ disk drive . . ." "Thank you, Mr. Jones, we'll have your computer back to you in six weeks. You're in the middle of a project? Too bad . . ."

Well, if this has been happening to you lately, maybe you should give Serviceland a call. Since they have no sales division and don't sell anything but service, they have attitudes and policies designed to meet the customer's needs. "Our service philosophy," says Jim Milligan, President of Serviceland of Northern California, "is not cast in concrete. We don't say, 'here's the menu, take what you want.' We want to work with the individual customer to work out a program that's good for him and good for Serviceland."

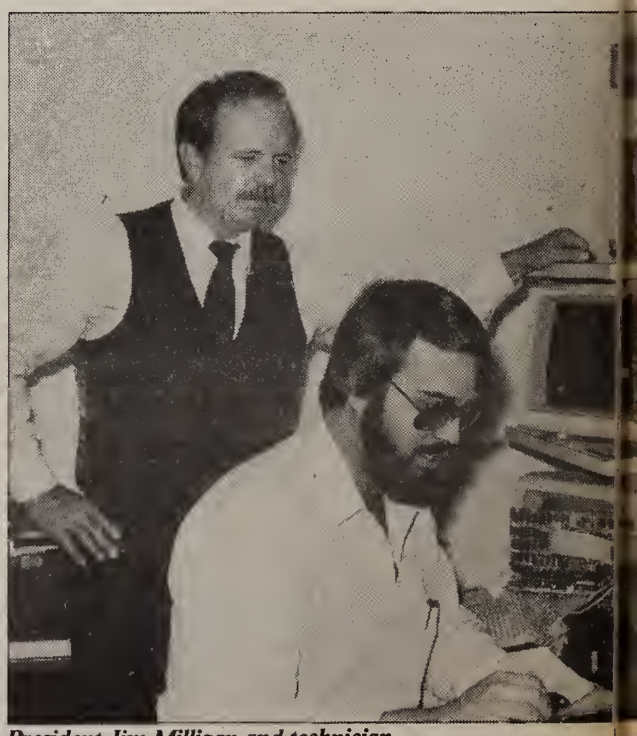
Serviceland specializes in microprocessor-based computers, and offers basically three types of repair service: an on-site maintenance contract, a courier service that picks up, repairs and returns the machine, or a walk-in service which allows the customer to bring the ailing computer into the Serviceland facility and be billed on an hourly-rate-plus-parts basis.

Since nowadays most people buy the various components of their systems from different manufacturers and retailers, which leads to warranty problems, Serviceland offers maintenance agreements on entire existing systems. Also, Milligan points out that the same service procedure isn't for everybody, and Serviceland can adjust accordingly. For example, the service-agreement customer, whose costs are prepaid, is mainly interested in speedy repair, and Serviceland is able to effect a 100% success rate on the customer's premises within four hours by performing a complete module swap. The walk-in customer, on the other hand, might find the module swap a bit expensive if the actual problem is relatively minor, and the Serviceland technicians will take the time to diagnose and repair the difficulty. (In-shop repairs are usually performed within 48 hours.) And if none of Serviceland's existing plans meet your particular needs, they'll work out an individualized plan for you.

Serviceland is part of a national network of franchises founded in October 1982. The Sunnyvale location, which opened last April, is currently the only branch in Northern California, though according to Milligan there are plans to open 14 more locations in the next four years.

The company, Milligan says, is still entirely run by service people with a zeal for quality, personalized work, satisfied customers, and no great love for the fast buck. "Quality service is our number one objective," he says. "We want people to get what they pay for." He notes that Serviceland spends most of its budget on state-of-the-art technicians rather than state-of-the-art advertising, and that employees find that the company still has the pioneer, community-oriented spirit of the early Silicon Valley days. At Serviceland, that spirit is here to stay, or, as Milligan says, "We may not end up being as profitable as some other companies, but we'll have more fun doing it."

— Mary Eisenhart



President Jim Milligan and technician Rick Maria of Serviceland. Photo: Mary Eisenhart

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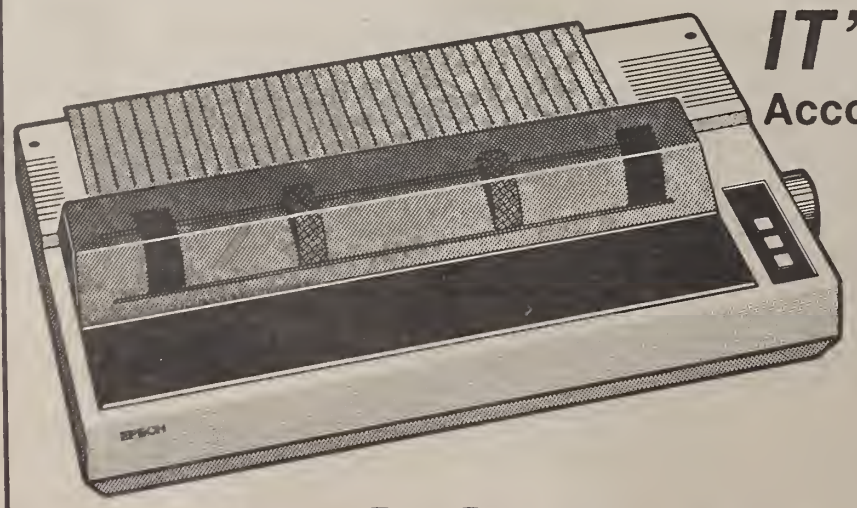

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